

Municipal Grant Dial-a-Ride

The Dial-a-Ride funding that has been available for the last three years has proven to be essential to providing transportation to elderly and disabled residents of Stratford. This funding has given us the opportunity to expand service that was once limited to In-Stratford rides to provide medical trips to out-of-Stratford doctors, clinics, and various therapies, including dialysis and chemotherapy.

The program, by its own policies, focuses on medical rides as the top priority. It also prioritizes the riders – giving service to those who do not drive and have no other means of getting to these appointments. By and large, these are the most frail, usually low-income residents, who are the first to suffer when services of any kind are reduced or eliminated.

In 2008, we provided a total of 16,768 rides (average was 1397 a month) to 290 unduplicated clients. This is more than double what we provided in 2005. In our program we average 850 medical rides a month, of which at least 40-50 are in communities other than Stratford. This gap in service was identified many years ago, and is finally being filled, at least to some extent, by the Dial-a-Ride money. Decreasing or eliminating these funds would mean having to end this out-of-Stratford service, and would greatly reduce the number of other medical rides and shopping trips we could provide. Again, our most fragile of the population will suffer. How many times do we start programs and services, giving our older adults hope and a renewed sense of being, only to take it away after a few years?

Stratford has one of the largest percentages of elderly in its community. We have about 13,500 persons over 60 living in Stratford. We also know the fastest growing segment of the population is that group 85 and over. Consequently, we can continue to expect this segment of the population to increase in number. This also does the group that is most apt to give up driving, thus need this service.

Our seniors deserve more from their government. We cannot go back to neglecting and ignoring their needs. These types of services – such as transportation – help sustain these individuals in the community, a far less expensive alternative than to force them into nursing homes prematurely. It is more cost-effective to help them with transportation than to make them give up their homes, just because they cannot drive. Many do not have family resources nearby to help, and their friends and peers are in no position to help.

For over thirty years, transportation has been identified as a major problem for older adults living in the community. Every town will attest to the fact that there is always transportation needs to be addressed. Now, in the last three years we have finally received some of the help necessary to face these challenges, and now when we finally have at least a partial solution, you want to take it away.

offering more from forest to shore



Taking away one's ability to get from point A to point B, limiting their capacity to go to medical appointments and go shopping, will force many seniors to have to reconsider their ability to remain in their own homes. This is a tragedy we cannot stand by and let happen. We urge that the funding for this program be maintained. With the elder population continuing to grow – and the age group over 85 remains the fastest growing segment of the entire population – we cannot ignore their needs. It is not cost-effective, nor is it morally appropriate to turn our backs on those that need us the most, and have already contributed so much to our communities.

We implore you that this funding be maintained.